

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

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The characteristic elements of insurgency as a concept of internal war by Harry Eckstein (1964: 12) matched those of the Malayan Emergency. As a form of internal war the Malayan Emergency was spearheaded by the CPM. Secondly, Malaya was experiencing process of political competition between nationalist groups and political parties that were positioning themselves to take over administrative control after the British left. On the other hand the CPM appeal was confined to the Chinese slums with an almost indifference bordered on apathy by the Malays and Indians as well as large sections of the Chinese community. So in terms of political competition they were doomed from the beginning and blinded by their ambition to exercise control and authority over the majority of Malayan people who would not give their support for the CPM way of life. Thirdly, it deviated from previously shared social norms. Fourthly, it was “warlike” in character as evident by CPM’s guerrilla tactics and the British’s military action. Finally, it involved serious disruption of settled institutional patterns, no less due to the emergency rules imposed by the British on the daily life of the people as well on the routines of government.

As had been discussed in earlier chapter, through the event of Malayan Emergency, the British government had taken some countermeasures against the guerrillas. It formed a Special Constabulary whereby many Malays were enlisted and enrolled in the first three months of the Emergency. They were given arms and employed primarily in guard duties. These tactics enabled the troops and police to conduct offensive Operations. Small defensive systems grew up around European offices and bungalows in the interior of the country. They were protected by barbed wire fences and other devices, and guarded by Special Constables. These measures encouraged the Europeans to stay put and fend off the first stage of the CPM insurgency plan. Neither were

the people over-zealous in their pursuit to wield power as the Malay Peninsular was historically under the domain of the Malay Rulers, who were not averse to the British presence in the Malay Peninsular. Furthermore, there was a tacit arrangement between the Malay Rulers and the British in matters pertaining to the overall social and political administration of the Malay Peninsular. The greater truth was that the appeal of Communism was largely confined to some sections the Chinese community and received negligible support and sympathy from the Malays and the Indians. Communism did not appeal to both these races because they were people of faith who believed in God and religion; and to them the CPM ideology obviously did not believe in God.

The Malays were content with their simple lifestyle as farmers, the Indians were generally resigned to their lot as estate labourers and the educated were for the most part grateful to be in employ of the Civil Service under the British. The British were wise not to generalise all Chinese as CPM sympathisers and supporters. Nonetheless the decision to relocate the Chinese living along jungle fringes with the view of alienating them from the intimidation and threats of the CPM was also an astute decision by the British.

The CPM also made no attempt to enlist the support of the Malay Rulers. This was because they got carried away with the successful tide of Communism in Russia and China and that reinforced their belief that their effort in Malaya would succeed. Unlike the British who had the resources to provide patronage in the form of jobs as well as social and economic opportunities for the Malays and Indians, the CPM did not have anything to offer to the Malayan people. Malay, Indian and even Chinese employees of Europeans were threatened, assaulted and sometimes killed to force them to run away from their jobs. Several Chinese Nationalist leaders and personalities were assassinated.

The characteristic of the Malayan Emergency, answered to what elements that constituted Psychological Operations during an Internal War. The thesis's findings had also highlighted the merits of deploying humane Psychological Operations as an essential necessity in holistic approach to combat the CPM's offensive that was the root cause of the Malayan model of internal war known as the Malayan Emergency.

1. SALIENT REFLECTIONS

The theoretical and conceptual framework of this thesis was articulated in respect to answering the crucial question on the nature of the Malayan Emergency vis a vis Eckstein's model of internal war and its Psychological Operations dimension. Besides ascertaining, the Malayan Emergency's impact on the civilian population and the circumstances that motivated and influenced the CPM to abandon its struggle, the thesis has also identified the various strategies, means and resources utilised in the Psychological Operations. These include both aerial and land operations with the full complement of government resources at the disposal of the British. The thesis also provides statistics, logistics and cost variables in chapter 2 and 3, needed to realise the Psychological Operations as in respect to number of radio as well as aerial broadcasts, total number of leaflets dropped during the duration of the Emergency.

The different type of communication media utilised as in broadcast messages and printed leaflets had been highlighted. This provides a perspective on how the Psychological Operations adopted impacted itself on the multi-cultural psyche of the Malayan people as in the indifferences of the majority of the Malayan psyche especially the Malay and Indian communities. The thesis has also highlighted the effectiveness of enlisting external resources to facilitate the Psychological Operations as in the assistance rendered by the Australians and Kiwi air units as well as Gurkha soldiers on land.

In the beginning, the CPM insurgency saw widespread violence, unrest and terrorism, while the CPM guerrillas claimed that their armed struggle was to free Malaya from British rule. To combat the CPM threat, the British administration introduced emergency laws, which infringed upon fundamental human rights such as by imposing restrictions on the media and allowing for arrests and indefinite detention without trial. However, the British realized that the battle against the CPM could be won only by granting independence to Malaya and handing over power to non-CPM nationalist elites. Consequently, it held general elections in 1955 in which the Umno-MCA-MIC Alliance won 51 of the 52 contested seats in the Federal Legislative Council. PAS won the other single seat. Significantly, the Alliance had campaigned on a platform of amnesty for the CPM to persuade them to lay down their arms besides independence and self government through peaceful means.

Although there was a growing political consciousness in the land, it was not in the same CPM pitch of venomous hatred with authority or the perception that because the British were imperialists that they have to be booted out of the Malay Peninsular by whatever means. The characteristic trait of the Malayan people then and now as Malaysians were that by nature they were a peace loving people and the majority of them were people of faith and belief in God. That the CPM had no place for God in their lives was more than enough reason for them to prefer the British from the onset. The majority of the Malayan people too wanted to forget the bitter experiences of the Japanese Occupation and wanted to get on with their lives. They detested the CPM brand of political violence compared to the benevolent and non-aggressive style of the British. Hence, it explained a lot about the landslide election victory of the Alliance Party.

The British also thwarted the CPM by establishing a national registration system. Those without identification cards were considered illegal and were seen as CPM sympathizers. Meanwhile the Briggs Plan was also implemented. Its objective under the Briggs Plan (named after Sir Harold Briggs, a retired general appointed to coordinate and direct military and civilian Operation during the emergency) was to cut off interaction between the Min Yuen and especially the Chinese population of Malaya. Nearly 500,000 Chinese squatters from outlying areas were resettled by the British to newly created and protected villages known as the New Villages (Coates 1992:94). This deprived the CPM of their supplies and information from the Chinese population. More important, the British employed Psychological Operations initiatives and tactics to win the "hearts and minds" of the population by seeking to unite the racially divided Malayan people to fight the CPM insurrection.

The successful use of Psychological Operations during the Malayan emergency serves as a classic reference on how it can be utilised to achieve the desired targeted objective. Historically, Psychological Operations was planned and used both as propaganda and affirmative action to address immediate as well as post insurgency phases. Historically, the application of humane Psychological Operations has proven to be almost as essential to the successful waging of war as in the use of manpower and weaponry. Despite its long history of successful employment, the potential potency for using the power of persuasion through Psychological Operations as an effective force multiplier to achieve national objectives with minimum destruction, has been recognized by only the most perceptive of military leaders and statesmen; although the enigma

of Psychological Operations has come into its own as an effective weapon system since World War II (WW II). The astute deployment of Psychological Operations significantly reduced enemy morale and combat effectiveness; promotes dissension within and defections from enemy ranks, support cover and deception operations; whilst proving its effectiveness to promote unity, cooperation and morale within the defending military rank and file, as well as its allies, to provide meaningful tactical and functional assistance to alleviate the suffering of affected groups and communities during an insurgent unrest.

However, it would be a gross generalisation to compartmentalise Psychological Operations as an initiative that was distinct or separate from the Police, Military or Administrative Operations that were realised during the Emergency to overcome and defeat the CPM. This is because Psychological Operations was at the root of the heart of all motivations be it in the Police, Military or Administrative functions during the period of internal war of political competition for leadership of authority in the Malayan Peninsular. On the other hand, to merely consider Psychological Operations as a propaganda exercise would be limiting or negating the vital and paramount role it played to bring law and order to a land that had descended into lawlessness with wide-scale loss of lives and destruction to property. It is the considered opinion of this thesis that the psychological operation was the soul that gave the desired motivation, impetus and action that saw the defeat of the CPM by the British.

Furthermore, by then the people had accepted the reality that the British could provide job and educational opportunities and was sincere in their efforts to improve the infrastructure as well as provide better amenities and facilities to the Malayan people, whilst the CPM could offer them nothing but threats, extortions and deaths in their quest for power that was not based on the aspirations of the majority of the Malayan people but for what the people came to perceive as for its own particular ideological aims. They had no plan or a blueprint of proposed development and administration for the Malay Peninsular. They had no continuous flow of resources from the CPM superpowers neither did they have the luxury of proximity to the geographical boundaries of these countries where Communism was on the rise.

The Malayan people viewed the disruption to previous shared values a hindrance and nuisance and wanted to get on with their lives. Above all, the British were perceived as benevolent rather than malevolent colonial masters of the Malay Peninsular. They were better and

humane masters of authority rather than the ruthless hallmark of the CPM personality. The tactical, strategic consolidation tactics founded on the principles of human psychology were appreciated by the Malayan majority.

It is for this reason that it is the considered opinion of this thesis to believe that the war against the CPM was primarily won based on adherence to humane psychological considerations and initiatives of the British Military Administration in the past Japanese occupation period. The CPM was quick and opportunistic to realise that there existed a vacuum of leadership after the Japanese Occupation and saw their early appeal and popularity albeit confined to the Chinese slum communities. They got carried away with the successes of their comrades in China, Russia and Vietnam to believe that they too would be successful in the Malay Peninsular like their compatriots elsewhere in the world. However it proved to be fatal psychological miscalculation on the part of the CPM because they took it for granted that the rest of the Malayan people viewed the British in the same negative light.

3. CONCLUSION

As Harry Eckstein qualified that Internal war as a kind of social force exerted in the process of political competition (Eckstein 1964:12), and in such cases, it is not the absence of institutional patterns but the very fact that social force is highly institutionalized (and probably not exercised in a warlike manner but with a nice observance of clearly understood norms, as in most feudal warfare) is highlighted as a moot and decisive point. Although it is not reasonable on the face of it to expect a theory about the causes of internal war in previously peaceable societies to fit as well in all cases where political violence is endemic and expected (Eckstein 1964:14). Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 took the case of the CPM rebellion necessitating the British Government in Malaya to implement several measures.

The significant dimension to the equation of the Malayan Emergency is the attitude, cooperation and responsiveness of the affected people towards the Psychological Operations. It is hoped that this study on the psychological operations of the Malayan Emergency could be considered as a worthy research model for other conflict zone with similar Ecksteinian identifying characteristics.